

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, April 14. 1694.

Quest. 1. **H**ow can Souls act when sepeare from their Bodies, and what Blessedness or Misery are they then capable of?

Ans. We suppose the Reason of the Doubt, how sepeare Souls can act, is that vulgar Error, that nothing's in the intellect but what was first in the Senses; and the consequence thereof, that thought is nothing but a necessary chain of Images, receiv'd from external objects, according to which *Hypothesis* it might be fairly enough, we think, concluded, that sepeare Spirits cou'd not act, not so much as in Reflection, because no Images to reflect upon, no brain to retain those Images, and if they don't act, it must also follow that they are not, they cease to be, since Action, which is of their *Essence*, ceases. If we therefore can overthrow the fundamental Error, all the rest will tumble, and it seems evident to us that we have many things in our minds whose Images we did not, nor ever cou'd, receive from Sense. Thought it self is a real, not a fantastick thing, this we reflect upon clearly and distinctly, but yet till any of our *Atheistical Virtuoso's* can tell us what *Figure, Colour, Dimensions, &c.*; it's of, we must beg their pardon if we don't beleive it corporeal, or that the Image of it is only form'd in our Senses. Again, the very act of Reflection on those Images which we own form'd from material objects, must it self be spiritual and immaterial; 'tis purely arbitrary, since there's no manner of necessity, why I shou'd choose out one object more than another, those who think there is, let 'em choose any two objects, and see if they can't think of either one or the other, therefore no antecedent necessity of thinking on either, and the same may be said of *Affirmation* and *Negation*. Now few deny but Angels think, without any such fanci'd *Species* or *Images*. If therefore our own minds, now join'd with Body, have yet such Acts as are clearly distinct from it, and if the Angels generally believ'd incorporeal, can yet think without any corporeal Images, what difficulty will there be in the Souls action, or perception, when in a sepeare Estate? Consequently, it must be capable of all the happiness or misery which depends on Reflection, which we find are the greatest that even this World can give us. But we shall add no more upon this nice point, being inform'd by the *Compleat Library* for February, that there is now in the Press, *A Comprehensive Essay upon the Reason and Nature of Spirits*, which has bin the regular product of the Learned Authors Studies for above thirty years.

Quest. 2. Whether there are any such Words in the Bible as — "You shall not know Winter from Summer but by the Green Leaves of the Trees?"

Ans. Not in our Bible, we know not what there may be in other Editions.

Quest. 3. 'Tis my Misfortune since my Fathers death to be left wholly at the disposal of my Mother in Law, who being an Anabaptist, enjoins me to frequent the Meetings of those of her persuasion, on peril of losing her Favour, on which my Fortune depends. I desire your Opinion whether I ought to submit to her Commands against my Judgment, or according to my Conscience, continue in the Church of England?

Ans. The Case admits no dispute — There are, we confess some difficulties as to Communion with a true and regular Church, when the Conscience scruples it, tho' unjustly, but all those arguments are now on your side, and conclude as much more strongly as right is better than wrong. And we know not what to think of a persons (for 'tis not fair to charge it on

a party) pleading for Peace, and Liberty of Conscience for themselves, which they won't allow to others; all that used to be said of *Hypocrisy, Violence, the Spirit of the Gospel, &c.* being directly against 'em. However, you ought to hazard all things, rather than act contrary to your Conscience, when so well inform'd, and trust in Gods providence to make up what you may lose on so good an Account, as he certainly will, one way or other, if you are sincere in what you profess. In the mean while you'd do well to make the Minister of your Mothers Congregation acquainted with the story, who must be a very ill man if he do's not endeavour to make her a better Christian.

Quest. 4. A Gentleman still living, formerly a Souldier in the low Countries, was then quarter'd at a Town call'd Swoll, where was a sucking Child in a very strange Condition, for when it suck'd its mothers Breast, the Milk that came from it turn'd into Dirt in its mouth, so that the Neighbours concluded it bewitch'd, and the Gentleman hearing of it went to the House, and advis'd the Mother to search the pillow which the Child lay on, accordingly she did, and found the feathers strangely and curiously wrought one within another, some of which she brought to the Gentleman, who found so much curiosity in 'em, as he thinks exceeded the Art of man, and concluded 'twas done by the power of some Daemon, advising her to burn Pillow, Feathers and all together, which she did, and the Child immediately thriv'd and did very well. Pray your thoughts of it?

Ans. We wou'd first be glad to know how the Gentleman came to think of the Childs pillow, rather than any thing else about it; but if we did, we don't pretend to unriddle the Devils meaning in that, and a hundred other foolish, ludicrous, idle tricks which he plays in such cases, either to make men fruitlessly curious, or perhaps to divert his own pain, or boast his power: Or lastly, it may be the effect of some task in the Nature of a Ceremony, impos'd upon the Witch without which she cou'd have no power to hurt the Child, which seems most probable, because it was eas'd as soon as the pillow was burnt.

Quest. 5. A Friend of mine that has a very good Trade, is so passionately in Love with a notorious Filt of the Town commonly known by the black Madam, or B. P. that I fear besides spoiling his Trade, and ruining his Fortune, she will wheedle him to marry her. Query, Whether I ought not in Conscience and Friendship to acquaint his Father and the rest of his Relations of it before it be too late?

Ans. That you may prevail with the young Man, procure him an account from several hands how publicly lewd she has been, and that by keeping her Company he will ruine his Reputation, and spoil his Fortune; and if he marry her, he'll probably find it very hard, if not impossible, to make her an honest woman; besides he'll entail a Curse on himself for disobedience. If this or the like Methods won't do, you ought to acquaint his Father, and that before tis too late.

Quest. 6. I am a French man, and of the Romish Religion, but settled in this Countrey, I acknowledg the present Government, yet am not satisfied, Query, Whether or no I may in Conscience take Arms against the King of France?

Ans. As you are settled here, and receive the benefits of this Government, and are preserved by it, so you are obliged as a Member of it, to do your utmost to the establishment thereof. And in opposing the French King,

'tis not your Religion, or his Person you fight against, but only for the suppressing his Tyranny.

Quest. 7. *An urgent necessity and a miserable fortune I am going to be forced to, causes me to be troublesome to you, my case is thus. I happened to be won to marry a man whose Fortune was much inferior to mine; after marriage my Friends were pleased to get him in a post maintain'd as a Gentleman; and for some time afterwards we lived happily together, till a brothers wife of mine whose husband died and left her very well, came to live with us as one in our Family, her my Husband soon became fond of, and basely withdrew his affection from me; he hath ever since used me extremely unkind, and is now selling what we have, to make it over to her; and wickedly designs to leave me in an helpless distress and ruin: Now pray Gentlemen, since I protest this I have sent you is really my Condition, I desire you would assist me with your advice, and answer me as soon as you can, what I had best do in this Circumstance, and you will infinitely oblige the distressed?*

Ans. Perhaps he may only have threaten'd you, without designing to effect it, if so, your obliging carriage may in time bring him wholly off; but if you find he really intends it, acquaint some of his Relations, whose persuasions and arguments will make him consider, if he is not already got above reason; and if this still proves unsuccessful, send but the Names of the Parties, with such attestations as we have no reason to doubt of the truth thereof (for the reputation of any one is too sacred to be stigmatiz'd upon Suspicion or a Fault repented of) and we'll endeavour to get 'em both (if both deserve it) into the Honourable Prefement of the Black Roll in the next Edition.

Quest. 8. *Being brought up to Learning till sixteen, I then desired to be put out an Apprentice, to which my Father wasaverse, tho' in time I gain'd his Consent, therefore can I be justly said to offend God, by resisting my Fathers will, and urging to be bound out, notwithstanding he gave his free Consent it should be done, and was afterwards glad he had done so, and whether he rightly imputed what misfortune I have sustained by it, to be the Effects and Punishment of my unwillingness to be rul'd by him in that particular, tho' I have ere since I have left his House, studied to pleasure him in what I am able?*

Ans. No, since there was no act of disobedience, and therefore your Father ought not to think your afflictions a Judgment for what was no Crime.

Quest. 9. *He is ancient, and I find him strangely wasted beyond the ordinary Course of nature, now I would be satisfi'd, whether grief, as it has dissolv'd his body, can also shorten his dayes? if so, then, not supposing my own to be all the crosses he has met with, if death should seize on him presently should I be a murderer within the scope of the sixth Commandment, or any ways obnoxious to the Punishment due to them that more openly and willingly violate that command?*

Ans. Tho' his grief may bring him into such distempers as will hasten his death, yet you being but the accidental-cause, are free from the guilt of it.

Quest. 10. *I made a Promise to lead an holy life, as well as to repent of past sins, (after I had oblig'd my Father in committing them,) I ingeniously own 'twas to be reconciled to him, and for fear of losing his assistance in the World, more than Sorrow for my offences continually offer'd to Almighty God. And wanting the great Encouragement in our family Examples of Piety; I am grown cold also in my devotion towards God, loose and secure in my Behaviour to the Eye of some men, (but abstaining from all gross Sins) and as need require, repeating and maintaining my former Vow, utterly renouncing such proceedings, desiring my Father with feigned Repentance, and but the shew of Godliness; now I doubt this will not hide my faults long from him, (which if he discover, and know this my behaviour, I am ruin'd,) but if it does, I fear I shall not live, or prosper in the World; since I know it can't be hid from God Almighty, &c. These very thoughts might be sufficient to reform some, but alas for my hard heart! they have done nothing but egg'd me on, thus to discover my*

self to you, who I've observ'd are a sure Friend in such Cases. Therefore I earnestly beg your Reflections on my story, not neglecting to clear my doubts?

Ans. You can never expect either peace of mind, or the blessing of God to attend such a practice, and therefore in all probability will be made unhappy in this world by it, unless you resolve to alter your course of life. Which if you do with sincerity, you may reasonably expect as many blessings, and good successes, as you have hitherto met with misfortunes and disappointments. And tho' you are not so happy in domestick pious examples as may be wished, yet you must consider the necessity of a good Life, and not suffer bare appearances to delude you.

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